

Camp Williams grows to fit needs of government, state

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The May 9, 1914, Lehi Banner announced: "Acting on the executive order of President Woodrow Wilson, the United States land office on Tuesday formally withdrew 18,700 acres of government land immediately west of Jordan Narrows for a military reservation and maneuver ground for the Utah National Guard."

This site, six miles northwest of Lehi, was initially named Camp Wedgewood, in honor of Edgar A. Wedgewood, adjutant general of Utah. The terrain, rugged and uneven, presented the type of topography troops were likely to encounter in actual warfare. A flat benchland area was large enough to accommodate camp sites for several regiments. Elsewhere the land consisted of steep foothills, deep ravines and Beef Hollow, a large arroyo several miles in length.

Wilson's order stipulated that the land was to be used permanently by the Utah National Guard for joint maneuvers of the militia of several states and the regular Army. He also allowed for target ranges for small arms and artillery.

On June 26, 1927, the state purchased an additional 153 acres of land for \$1,461, and in 1931 obtained 199 more acres for \$2,533.

World War I postponed the construction of facilities at Jordan Narrows. From 1914 to 1922 it was used just once. After 1926, however, it began to be used on a regular, permanent basis for annual encampments. In 1928 the camp was named for Brig. Gen. W.G. Williams, who as adjutant general was the prime mover in seeing that the camp was established as a permanent training site.

At first Camp Williams consisted of two-men pup tents for the soldiers and corrals for the horses (some National Guard units were cavalry groups until 1941). As

time went on, new, more permanent and more modern facilities were constructed — 16-foot pyramidal tents for the troops and 9-by-9 wall tents for the officers, with wooden pallets for floors.

The Daily Herald Celebrates the



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In 1927 the state constructed (with federal assistance) 147 of these tent floors, two latrines and bathhouses, 10 mess halls, 10 hayracks and mangers, and 19 watering troughs, at a cost of \$56,420.

The following year an administration building and recreation hall were built, and an electric light system was added. During 1929 another bathhouse and mess hall were constructed along with a post exchange, infirmary, 11 shelters for animals and a corral at the Orem Interurban railroad station to the camp's east.

By 1934, during the depths of the Great Depression, total expenditures for construction at Camp Williams totaled \$246,124. Nearly 75 percent of these funds came from the federal government. Most of the state's \$54,829 expenditure was used to construct the recreation hall, the caretaker cottage and the Hostess House.

This Hostess House, a WPA project, was designed by architect Edward O. Anderson for receptions and for an officers' club. It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a popular spot for weddings and other private receptions.

Guardsmen who trained at Camp Williams during the 1920s and 1930s were among the first Utahns inducted into military service prior to World War II. On March, 1941, nine months before Pearl Harbor, the government activated all units of the Utah National Guard, including Lehi's own Service Battery of the 222nd Field Artillery.

While these Utah units served gallantly on both the Pacific and European fronts, the National Guard made Camp Williams available as a sub-post and training site for regular Army troops stationed at Fort Douglas.

"Perspiring troops experienced the thrill of battle ... [at the camp] when they crawled through blinding dust over troublesome obstacles — while under actual gunfire ... [on] the 'personal conditioning infiltration course,'" which the Army constructed at Camp Williams.

As a one-regiment facility, Camp Williams was too small for the 5,000 men the Army planned to station there during the war; therefore, the cantonment area was nearly doubled in size. By June 1943, Army engineers had constructed more than 100 buildings, half permanent, half temporary. After the Army completed its training programs, Camp Williams was declared surplus property and returned to the State of Utah in November 1944.

After the war ended, the National Guard had difficulty recruiting veterans to fill roster slots, despite a full-day's pay for each of 48 two-hour drills during the year and full pay for the two-week summer encampment. In 1948 permanent metal frames were installed in concrete tent floors. During 1949 and 1950, four new latrines, a security fence around the ammunition area

Interesting History and Many Uses

(Editor's Note: How much do you know about Camp Williams? Probably not much, but it is a national guard training camp. But it actually is used for many other things and has a long and interesting history. This is the first of two articles on the camp.)

By EDNA LOVERIDGE

LEHI — Most people in Utah have heard of Camp Williams, guard training camp and most know it's a national guard training camp and have at least a vague idea of where it is. But few know that it's nearly half a century old, or how it got its name, or anything else of its interesting history or the many uses made of it besides pure military training.

The colorful and historic camp was created by President Woodrow Wilson on April 24, 1914, when he set aside 18,700 acres of land adjacent to the Jordan Narrows and Jordan River for military use. Probably both the regular Army and National Guard used the camp prior to 1917 when the National Guard held a 25-day encampment just before entry into federal service for World War I. At this first recorded encampment, the modern convenience of the time was spring water being piped to the camp areas taps and wooden tent floors in the officers' tents.

1922 Encampment

The next recorded use of the camp was by the guard in August, 1922, for an encampment. In 1927 the state purchased one quarter section of land and leased another (which was later purchased) upon which the camp proper now stands. It was in this year the first buildings were erected and a continuing improvement program begun.

Sometime in 1928 Governor George H. Dern named the area "Camp W. G. Williams," in honor of Brig Gen W. G. Williams, the adjutant general of the Utah National Guard, whose efforts were mainly responsible for securing the site.

During World War II the camp was turned over to the federal government for use as an army training center. The army erected a number of temporary barracks. These units have since been renovated and converted to supply and administrative buildings. The camp was returned to the state in 1947, and has been in continuous use by the national guard and other agencies since.

Primary Purpose

Captain Brent M. Gudmundsen, facilities officer for the camp, said that "the primary purpose of the camp is to provide a ready camp at which Utah's national guard could be mobilized almost overnight." He indicated that the camp is maintained year-round to provide a training area for the guard, for conferences and also to provide a state training site for the people of Utah.

The camp maintains adequate fire protection facilities, maintenance shops and winter storage for the guard's equipment. Three families also reside on the post. These include the assistant caretaker, a chef, and the supervisor of the hostess house. There are seven two-story barracks and three tent areas which house the officers during field training. The tent areas will be replaced by additional barracks in the near future, however. There are 200 huts, which are roomy, cement-floored, metal-roofed shelters with roll-up canvas siding from eight to 12 feet high.

Non-denominational religious services are held each Sunday during field training or weekend training sessions. Hereafter, they have been held in the open in the amphitheater. However, this year a post chapel was ready. The amphitheater, the West Bowl, named after Brig. Gen. J. Wallace West, is beautiful and seats approximately 3000 men and provides movies and other entertainment nightly during training. Graduation exercises and other ceremonies are also held in the beautiful outdoor setting. A large parade ground in the center of the camp is planted in grass. There are several baseball diamonds and volleyball and other athletic equipment is available. There is a small golf course, some fishing and limited swimming facilities.

The camp now consists of approximately 21,093 acres, with some other lands adjacent to the reservation available for use when needed, bringing the total to 22,000 acres.

Used men from the camp have been practicing and providing target training and infantry training practice and good road building practice and the various types of terrain for winter exercises. There are electrical, plumbing and carpenter shops, a post headquarters building, troop headquarters and buildings for other quarters and buildings for other use. The post dispensary can accommodate 12 patients for short periods and is open during field training. An ammunition storage area is to the west of the main camp. An airstrip, which can accommodate light aircraft, is also maintained and open year-round.

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